

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAJ-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 EB-07 /067 W

----- 127260

R 221540Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1854

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 10061

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, GR

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT TO NEW DEMOCRACY DEPUTIES

1. SUMMARY: THE PRIME MINISTER MET WITH THE NEW DEMOCRACY DEPUTIES DECEMBER 20 AND PRESENTED HIS VIEWS ON MAJOR ISSUES OF DOMESTIC AND EXTERNAL CONCERN. ON THE WHOLE, HIS TONE WAS OPTIMISTIC AND STRESSED THE FAVORABLE PROSPECTS FOR THE GREEK ECONOMY, CYPRUS, GREEK-TURKISH RELATIONS AND THE NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY. END SUMMARY.

2. THE PRIME MINISTER HELD A SPECIAL MEETING WITH ALL THE NEW DEMOCRACY (ND) DEPUTIES ON DECEMBER 20 JUST BEFORE THE PARLIAMENT BEGAN ITS CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S RECESS (UNTIL JANUARY 12). CARAMANLIS GAVE THE ND PARLIAMENTARY GROUP HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE PRINCIPAL SUBJECTS OF NATIONAL CONCERN, BOTH IN THE DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS AREAS. HE ALSO SHARED WITH THEM HIS VIEW OF THE NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY AND ITS SPECIAL ROLE IN FACING UP TO AND SATISFYING NATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS.

3. COMMENTING ON DOMESTIC CONCERNS, THE PRIME MINISTER POINTED OUT THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS FORMULATING A POLICY
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WHICH CONFORMS WITH THE TRUE INTERESTS OF THE NATION, AND

THAT IT IS SPARING NO EFFORT TO CREATE A TRANQUIL CLIMATE. WHILE EXPRESSING PRIDE THAT GREECE HAS A DEMOCRATIC REGIME, HE NEVERTHELESS CAUTIONED THAT DEMOCRACY IS BY ITS NATURE "VERY SENSITIVE." IN THIS CONNECION, HE MADE A NOTE OF CERTAIN RECENT "DANGEROUS TENDENCIES" AND NOTED INTER ALIA THAT THE PRESS MUST BE CONSCIENTIOUS IN REPORTING THE TRUTH RATHER THAN MISLEADING ITS READERS. HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT CERTAIN CIRCLES OF THE OPPOSITION AND OF THE PRESS SUPPORT POSITIONS WHICH ARE INIMICAL TO THE INTERESTS OF DEMOCRACY; HOWEVER, HE CONTINUED, SUCH A SMALL GROUP SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO OVERTURN THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE PEOPLE FOR A HEALTHY DEMOCRACY AND SOCIETY.

4. HE THEN DISCUSSED HIS VIEW OF THE NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY AND TOOK NOTE THAT CRITICS ALLEGE THAT IT IS EITHER REVIVING A REGIME OF THE RIGHT OR THAT IT IS BEING DRIVEN TO THE LEFT. THE PRIME MINISTE ASSERTED THAT, IN FACT, THE NEW DEMOCRACY FOLLOWS THE "CORRECT PATH" AND THAT ITS POSITION IS CLEAR: "WE BELONG NEITHER TO THE RIGHT, NOR TO THE CENTER, NOR TO THE LEFT, BUT RATHER IN EVERY INSTANCE WE DO THAT WHICH IS JUDGED SUITABLE FOR THE COUNTRY AND WE WILL NOT BE GUIDED BY PREJUDICE OR DOGMATISM." IN SHORT, THE PM CLAIMED THAT THE PARTY ACTS WITH REALISM AND WISDOM AND, IN FACT, CAN BE CONSIDERED TO BE THE MOST PROGRESSIVE POLITICAL PARTY IN GREECE, A PARTY WHICH USES AS ITS CRITERIA OF PRFORMANCE "NATIONAL INTERESTS, NATIONAL DIGNITY, ECONOMIC PROGRESS AND NATIONAL COHESION."

5. THE PRIME MINISTER EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT GREEEK-TURKISH RELATIONS WILL IMPROVE IN THE WAKE OF THE RECENT MINISTERIAL MEETING IN BRUSSELS. HE TOOK NOTE OF THE FACT THAT IN BRUSSELS "ALL THE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES" SUPPORTED EFFORTS GEARED TOWARDS A JUST SOLUTION OF THE CYPRUS PROBLEM. CARAMANLIS ALSO STATED IT IS POSSIBLE THAT TURKEY WILL REALIZE, IN LIGHT BOTH OF ITS OWN DOMESTIC ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND THE UNANIMOUS STAND OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, THAT A PROLONGATION OF THE UNSETTLED CYPRUS PROBLEM WILL HARM IT MORE THAN GREECE. HE ADDED THAT RESTORATION OF GREEK-TURKISH FRIENDSHIP CONSTITUTES A REAL NECESSITY. WHILE NOTING HIS OWN POLICY OF MODERATION VIS-A-VIS TURKEY
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AND THE CYPRUS PROBLEM, THE PM, NEVERTHELESS, CAUTIONED THAT IN NO WAY WOULD THAT MODERATION BE EXTENDED TO THE POINT WHERE IT TRANSGRESSES THE LIMITS OF NATIONAL INTEREST AND NATIONAL DIGNITY.

6. ON THE ECONOMIC FRONT, CARAMANLIS EXPRESSED OPTIMISM FOR THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ECONOMY, BUT POINTED TO THE NEED FOR SELF-RESTRAINT AND A SPIRIT OF FRUGALITY TO

SOLVE CURRENT ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES. HE STRESSED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN REQUIRED TO DIVERT FUNDS FROM SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROGRAMS TO THE MILITARY BECAUSE OF NATIONAL SECURITY NEEDS.

THE PRIME MINISTER WAS VERY HOPEFUL THAT GREECE'S EARLY ACCESSION TO THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY WOULD BE EXPEDITED, AND THAT APPROVAL OF THE SECOND FINANCIAL PROTOCOL UNDER THE ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT WOULD BE FORTHCOMING.

7. ALL IN ALL, THE PRIME MINISTER'S TONE WAS QUITE POSITIVE. IN THAT CONNECTION, AN ND DEPUTY--HIMSELF NORMALLY RATHER GUARDED IF NOT PESSIMISTIC IN OUTLOOK--REMARKED TO THE DCM OVER THE WEEKEND THAT THE PM APPEARED MORE RELAXED, CONFIDENT, OPTIMISTIC, AND UP-BEAT ON OCCASION OF THIS MEETING THAN HE HAD SEEN HIM IN A LONG TIME.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DEMOCRACY, SPEECHES, POLITICAL PARTIES, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 DEC 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975ATHENS10061
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750444-0486
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751220/aaaaarmc.tel
Line Count: 131
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 APR 2003 by MartinML>; APPROVED <30 SEP 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT TO NEW DEMOCRACY DEPUTIES
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, GR, (KARAMANLIS, KONSTANTINOS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006